

Tapping into the Wisdom of the Elemental Archetypes

by Debra Silverman

What do you do when your buttons get pushed? Do you come out swinging or walk away? Do you assume responsibility and jump into action, or do you pretend you aren't angry at all?

When it comes to dealing with stress, everyone has an elemental style of dealing with it, and everyone has an ego. Our reactions are often as predictable as the sun coming up every day and going down each night. Whatever the cause, be it compounded frustrations, work and life pressures, stress at home, or just sharing the road with other drivers — we react.

Often, when we hear news of crisis or terrible incident in our world, a shockwave penetrates our hearts and psyches. Emotional pain is indiscriminating and it can nestle in the most resilient of hearts and get stuck. The night after the last terrorist incident, I went to sleep imagining how many lives were shattered. What is it like now for the injured and the bereaved as they lay down to sleep?

What kind of person lies in bed and thinks about others' pain? That would be a water personality, like me. They tend to dwell on sadness, which allows fear to linger.

I asked myself, "Why do you do that?" The truth is, it's my way of honoring the pain. It's a common reaction in healers, we feel too much. Fortunately, I've learned to turn on my observer and truly notice my habitual behavior. I was aware of and could plainly see my reaction. Therefore, I could choose a different and healthier response, so the low-grade sadness that too often becomes a backdrop in my life faded away.

In some cases, people hit with a family crisis or painful and emotional trauma pour themselves into an information-gathering mode by doing research, reading background materials and gathering facts. These personality types watch the news and seek out every possible detail. They go online and read the history of the incident and the people involved. This would be an air personality because knowing the whole story and talking about what they learned makes them feel better.

Air personalities talk themselves out of pain. They say spiritual one-liners like, "It's all good," "It is what it is" or "Life's perfect." It's how they try to rationalize their pain. They're not about feelings. They replace the feelings with talking, reading and logic. It's just their way.

Why does the water personality type dwell on pain, while the air personalities distances themselves from pain and focuses on words and information? That's a good earth question.

Earthy personality types are people who want to understand. For them, there is no value in dwelling or talking about something when it can't be fixed. They're more likely to respond by saying, "Enough with the talking and feeling – do something!"

Earth people need practical, concrete results and solutions to make them feel better. They'll analyze the event and decide whether or not they can make a difference; if they can't, they'll stop thinking about it

and go back to work. They do not dwell on emotional content. Earth personalities are often leaders or business owners and they understand what responsibility demands of them. They assume there will be a government leader or someone like them to step in during a crisis, so they're usually the first to go back to business as usual when a crisis occurs.

Lastly, are those fire personalities who can be found screaming at the television, swearing and getting red in the face. We all know those people who are quick to judge, and have radical opinions about everything. Thankfully, they create a release for all of us without even knowing it. Fire types will speak to the unspeakable and say things like, "People are stupid," "That religion is dumb," or "That political party is full of crooks". At worst, they're the bigots or the overly blunt ones who "say it like it is." What's more, when they're done spouting their opinions, they wonder why everyone else has a fire extinguisher in hand.

All four personalities are needed to add color to this tapestry of life. Typically, without being informed on personality types and the elements, each type wishes the other would be just like they are. We all feel totally justified in being impulsive and ego driven.

"Can't you feel?" asks the water personality.

"Can't you see the other's point of view?" asks the air personality.

"Can you just get over it?" requests earth, "Don't waste precious time on what you can't change."

Meanwhile, the fire person is screaming, "What is wrong with people, they're so dumb!"

Wouldn't it be amazing if we could be conscious of our egos, the elements and our reactions? When you take a step back and see how the elements play out in yourself and the people around you, something magical happens. You forgive and let live. You realize the value of the other's approach, as well as your own. You forgive yourself and others for the strengths you formerly thought were inadequacies.

Egos are predictable. Our soul's voice is harder to come by. Imagine what the world would be like if we could all take the high road and understand, with wisdom, how different we are.